

What Is Claimed Is:

1. A business management method comprising the steps of:

obtaining information about earnings and expenses based on expenses incurred by content providers supplying users with recording devices compatible with contents offered by the providers, on content subscription fees paid by said users for receiving said contents, and on earnings derived from services and/or advertisements included in said contents; and

controlling fees to be paid for said services and/or said advertisements in accordance with said information about said earnings and expenses thus obtained.

2. A business management method according to claim 1, wherein said services constitute electronic commerce practiced by virtual shops.

3. A business management method according to claim 1, wherein a share of said earnings is passed on to manufacturers of said recording devices in accordance with said information about said earnings and expenses.

4. A business management method according to claim 3, wherein said recording devices are leased free of charge to said users.

5. A business management method according to claim 1, wherein said content subscription fees paid by said users are controlled based on said information about said earnings and expenses.

6. A business management method according to claim 1, wherein the business management method further comprises the steps of managing the number of recording devices compatible with said contents provided by said content providers to said users, and determining fees to be paid for said services and/or said advertisements included in said contents in accordance with the managed number of recording devices.

7. A business management method according to claim 1, wherein said recording devices each include a hard disc drive.

8. A business management apparatus comprising:  
information processing means for obtaining information about earnings and expenses obtained based on said expenses incurred by content providers supplying users with recording devices compatible with contents offered by said providers, on content subscription fees paid by said users for receiving said contents, and on said earnings derived from services and/or advertisements included in said contents; and

controlling means for controlling fees to be paid for said services and/or said advertisements in accordance with said information about said earnings and expenses thus obtained.

9. A business management apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said services constitute electronic commerce practiced by virtual shops.

10. A business management apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said controlling means further allows a share of said earnings to be passed on to manufacturers of said recording devices in accordance with said information about said earnings and expenses.

11. A business management apparatus according to claim 8, wherein said controlling means further controls said content subscription fees paid by said users based on said information about said earnings and expenses.

12. A business management apparatus according to claim 8, wherein the business management apparatus further comprises:

managing means for managing the number of recording devices compatible with said contents provided by said content providers to said users; and

determining means for determining fees to be paid for said services and/or said advertisements included in

said contents in accordance with the managed number of recording devices.

13. A data broadcast delivery method comprising the steps of:

allocating a data broadcast to any unused bandwidth over a broadcast band used by a broadcasting station to broadcast programs;

causing a receiving side to receive said data broadcast for storage onto a storage medium in each of television sets installed;

sorting out contents in the stored data broadcast; and

allowing viewers to operate said television sets for selective viewing of the sorted-out contents.

14. A data broadcast delivery method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of:

if a content selected by said receiving side is related to electronic commerce practiced by a virtual shop, then permitting access to said virtual shop associated with the selected content.

15. A data broadcast delivery method according to claim 13, further comprising the step of storing said data broadcast successively onto said storage medium in such a manner that when a storage capacity of said

storage medium either drops below a predetermined level or is completely exhausted, the initially recorded broadcast data are deleted from said storage medium to make room for the most recently received broadcast data.

16. A data broadcast delivery method according to claim 13, wherein the data broadcast that may be stored onto said storage medium is delivered only to viewers having subscribed to membership in advance.

17. A data broadcast delivery method according to claim 16, wherein the subscription to said membership is chargeable.

18. A data broadcast delivery method according to claim 13, wherein said data broadcast includes audio data and video data.

19. A business management method comprising the steps of:

obtaining information about earnings and expenses based on costs incurred by equipment manufacturers supplying users either free of charge or for a fee below cost with recording devices compatible with contents offered by content providers to said users, on content subscription fees paid by said users for receiving said contents, and on earnings derived from services and/or advertisements included in said contents; and

controlling amounts of money to be paid back to said equipment manufacturers in accordance with said information about said earnings and expenses.

20. A business management method according to claim 19, wherein said business management method further comprises the step of controlling fees to be paid for said services and/or said advertisements in accordance with said information about said earnings and expenses.

21. A business management apparatus comprising:  
information processing means for obtaining information about earnings and expenses based on costs incurred by equipment manufacturers supplying users either free of charge or for a fee below cost with recording devices compatible with contents offered by content providers to said users, on content subscription fees paid by said users for receiving said contents, and on earnings derived from services and/or advertisements included in said contents; and

controlling means for controlling amounts of money to be paid back to said equipment manufacturers in accordance with said information about said earnings and expenses.

22. A business management apparatus according to claim 21, wherein said controlling means further controls

fees to be paid for said services and/or said advertisements in accordance with said information about said earnings and expenses.